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ABSTRACT

Programs funded through the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act sex equity set aside are required to provide occupational education in high wage, high skill, and nontraditional careers. This bulletin, one of a series reporting on Perkins Act funding in New Jersey, reports on the effectiveness of displaced homemaker and sex equity programs funded by the Perkins Act with regard to changes in the self-esteem of participants. Data were collected from 56 participants using the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory as the measurement tool. The sample was primarily female (96.4%). Mean test scores were significantly higher on the posttest than on the pretest for all respondents from all programs combined and for females. Self-esteem scores increased on the posttest for every age group, but none of these increases were significant. The increases for Hispanics and Caucasians were significant, but increases for Blacks were not. Positive self esteem is critical in the empowerment process for successful job performance and motivation. Since projects operating with Perkins Act sex equity set aside funds have shown continued success in increasing self esteem, these projects should be continued and expanded. (Contains 1 table, 2 figures, and 14 references.) (S)D

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RESEARCH BULLETIN

NEW JERSEY
CAREER EQUITY ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Fall, 1995 LIFE SKILLS CENTER, MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY Research Bulletin No. 13

SELF ESTEEM: CHANGES DUE TO PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

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The Office of Bilingual Education and Equity Issues, New Jersey Department of Education, through funding from the Carl D. Perkins Act sponsors displaced homemaker and gender equity programs throughout the state. As one component of an on going evaluation, program participants take a series of pre and post tests. Results are analyzed independently by the Career Equity Assistance Center for Research and Evaluation at Montclair State University (CEAC). This bulletin is one in a series of four reports on test results obtained for Program Year 1995. Other bulletins present results of testing for technical careers, equity standards and sex role stereotyping.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS INCREASE SELF ESTEEM

Programs funded through the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, P.L.101-392, sex equity set aside provide occupational education and services that address issues related to gender bias. Gender bias and the decrease in self esteem that occurs in females beginning in the early elementary years are factors that have contributed to economic disparity based on gender. This lowered self esteem continues as women get older, resulting in limitations in the career options and educational opportunities selected.

Programs offered through the Perkins Act sex equity set aside in New Jersey are consistent with the *Strategic Plan for Systemic Improvement of Education in New Jersey*. One of the most relevant relationships between the Strategic Plan and the Perkins Act programs pertain to identifying corrective actions to address educational inequities resulting from gender discrimination. Programs designed to increase self esteem are addressing economic disparity based on gender.

This bulletin reports the effectiveness of displaced homemaker and sex equity programs funded by the Perkins Act with regard to change in self esteem. In New Jersey these programs are administered by the Office of Bilingual Education and Equity Issues of the New Jersey Department of Education.

UD030916

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sadker, Sadker and Steindam (1989) found that the education schools provide is not the same for girls and boys. The education boys receive is classified as superior and is characterized as tailored to meet the individual needs of male students. Female students are encouraged to adopt background and supporting roles, reinforcing the unspoken limits created for them. The self esteem of girls drops three times more than boys by high school (Orenstein, 1994). This inevitably affects the sex role stereotypes and the willingness or interest to enter nontraditional careers.

The same forces that work to limit an adult woman's entrance into nontraditional careers have also been found to under evaluate and under utilize their talents and abilities (Kiesler, Sproull, & Eccles, 1995). Many young girls experience a decrease in self-confidence (Meyer & Koeler, 1990; Orenstein, 1994), self esteem (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) and self assurance about their abilities (Brown, Fulkerson, Furr, & Voight, 1984) during their mid career school years.

Young girls take on a "diminished sense of self, self abnegation, self doubt, and dependence" in the later elementary school years, encouraging and reinforcing the girls to look for sources of self esteem and personal success in non-academic areas" (Beal, 1994).

This trend continues as these women get older. It has been reported that the self esteem of women is consistently lower than that of men (Flansburg, 1993; Singer & Stake 1986; Marron & Kayson, 1984). A study of masculinity and femininity in female scientists and other occupations found that self esteem is correlated with masculinity but not with femininity (Olson Long, 1991). A history of discouragement and limitations in the education system has apparently had a lasting effect on women's self esteem.

Disparity in education early in a female's life translates to financial disparity in later life. A report by the American Association of University Women(AAUW) Educational Foundation cites education level as closely linked to poverty in female headed single parent families (AAUW Report, 1992). As single mothers and their children comprise a large majority of people living below the poverty line, the need for equity in education becomes very apparent (The American Almanac, 1994).

METHOD OF STUDY

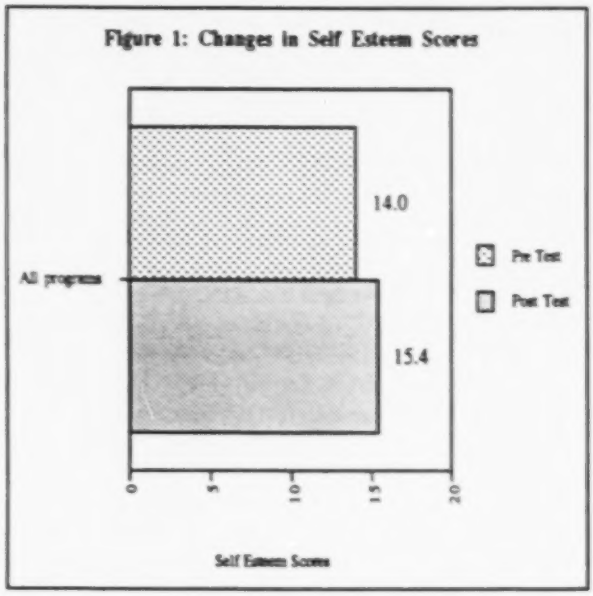
Data was collected from participants enrolled in displaced homemaker and sex equity programs throughout New Jersey during the Program Year 1995. Each program submitted test results from a sample of their participants. In the present study, results were included only for those participants who completed both pre and post tests. Matched pre and post tests were collected from 56 participants.

The Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory was used as the measurement tool in this survey. This inventory consists of 25 forced choice questions in which the participant is required to respond to each statement as either "like me" or "unlike me". Self esteem, as defined by the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory, is "the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains with regard to her or himself". Reliability measures for this test are quite high, ranging from .87 to .92, and validity has also been proven through various tests of construct, concurrent and predictive validity as well as factor analysis (Coopersmith, 1993).

Pre tests were completed prior to

Table 1: Demographic Data

		Count	Percent
Ethnicity	Am. Indian/Alaskan Native	5	9.4
	Asian/Pacific Islander	4	7.5
	Black	5	9.4
	Caucasian	33	62.3
	Hispanic	5	9.4
Age	Yrs. 12 - 17	2	3.9
	Yrs. 18 - 19	7	13.7
	Yrs. 20 - 25	12	23.5
	Yrs. 26 - 30	6	11.8
	Yrs. 36 - 40	10	19.6
	Yrs. 41 -45	9	17.6
	Yrs. 46 & older	5	9.8
Group Represented	Students	25	44.6
	Single Parents	31	55.4
Parental Status	Parent	50	94.3
	Not a Parent	3	5.7



the beginning of the programs. Post tests were completed six weeks after completion of that program segment most likely to affect self esteem. Completed tests were scored by program personnel and the results forwarded for analysis to the Career Equity Assistance Center for Research and Evaluation at Montclair State University.

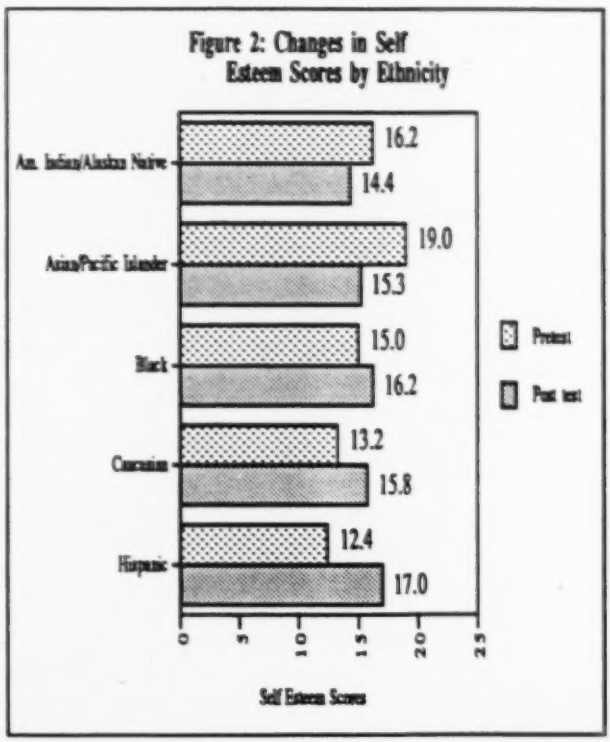
FINDINGS

The sample was primarily female (96.4%). Participants ranged in age from 12 years to over 46 years of age. The largest portion of respondents were in the 20-25 year range (23.5%) followed by the 36 to 40 year old category (10%). Caucasians comprised the largest segment of the participants in the survey, (62.3%), with each of the other ethnic classifications accounting for less than 10% of the participants. The participants represented groups from the Achieving Sex Equity Through Students (ASETS) program, other students, and Displaced Homemakers Survival Skills (DHSS). The majority of subjects are DHSS followed closely by students other than ASETS students. The majority of the participants (94.3 %) reported being parents.

Mean test scores were significantly higher on the post test than on the pre test for all respondents from all programs combined and for females. Scores for males on the pre and post test did not change whereas female scores increased significantly. Self esteem scores increased post test for every age group, however none of the increases were significant.

Mean post test scores for participants who classified themselves as either Hispanic or Caucasian were significantly higher than mean pre test scores. Mean post test scores for Blacks were also higher than mean pre test scores, but the increase was not significant. Mean post test scores for self esteem were lower than mean pre test scores for participants who classified themselves as American Indians/Alaskan Native and Asian /Pacific Islander but neither decrease was significant. The small number of participants in these latter categories limits the conclusions that can be drawn concerning the decreases in the mean scores for these groups.

The Hispanic group had the highest post test score (M17). The second highest post test scores were Black participants (M16.2) with Caucasian participants (M15.8) only slightly



lower (see Figure 2). The Hispanic participants had the greatest increase in mean score between the pre and post tests (D4.6).

DISCUSSION

The displaced homemaker and sex equity programs show significant increases in mean score of self esteem for participants from all programs combined and for Hispanic and Caucasian participants.

Programs funded through the Perkins sex equity set aside have increased the self esteem for females and decreased the difference between the mean scores for males and females on the post test. A positive self esteem is critical in the empowerment process for successful performance and involvement and motivation (Coopersmith, 1993).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since projects operating with Perkins Act sex equity set aside funds have shown continued success in increasing self esteem, these projects should be continued and expanded. The wide range of opportunities and services offered such as:

- ✔ ASETS (Achieving Sex Equity Through Students) workshops,
- ✔ Saturday workshops that focus on nontraditional careers,
- ✔ role model panels and
- ✔ life skills programs, such as New Beginnings

have increased knowledge of gender equity standards.

At a time when New Jersey's educational system is emphasizing the importance of gender equity by its inclusion in the *Strategic Plan for Systemic Improvement of Education in New Jersey*, the continuation and expansion of the sex equity set aside programs is essential.

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